

## OCOTILLO WELLS DISTRICT

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# Blowsand Reader

VOLUME 11

ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2015

## OW Holiday Food Drive

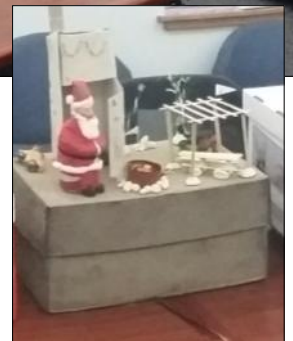
By Melony Light, Staff Services Analyst

The Ocotillo Wells SVRA staff collected an estimated 400 pounds of canned and dry food goods, along with blankets, for donation to the Borrego Springs community food bank during the 2015 Holiday Season. District Service areas such as Maintenance, Resources, Visitor Services, Interpretation, Admin Services, Trails, Auto Shop, and GIS competed in two separate categories—Best Decoration and Best Total Weight.

The decorated food boxes were judged on how well the box design represented Ocotillo Wells SVRA as an organization in the local community. Some service areas created and entered decorated food boxes that represented both the Ocotillo Wells District and the individual service areas (e.g., the Maintenance staff created a box that incorporated the park visitors' camping experience with employees' handmade Santa, CXT, ATV, camp fire and shade ramada). Staff voted for the "best" decorated food box during the District's holiday meeting and potluck. The Maintenance services area box won by a huge margin!



The Best Total Weight for food goods donated was awarded to the Admin Services staff. They were honored with the "Golden Reindeer Award" for the 2015 Holiday Food Drive, which they will proudly display in the District Office until the 2016 holiday season.



(Continued on next page...)

## OW Holiday Food Drive *continued...*



The “Best” of all this holiday season is that District staff had an opportunity to participate in a food drive that provided Salton Sea ‘Slab City’s 170+ homeless residents with donations. Ernie Loza, a Borrego Springs resident, collected the District food donations and delivered the

boxes to Slab City Ministry, a non-profit organization. Donations were distributed in Slab City just in time for the holidays.



# Message from the Superintendent

By Garratt Aitchison, District Superintendent

The past couple of months went by with lightning speed, and it's hard to believe that February is just around the corner. Veterans Day, Thanksgiving, and the Christmas holidays brought out thousands of visitors, both new and returning. I was pleased to get so many positive comments from the public about our professional staff and the efforts they go to in ensuring that OHV enthusiasts have a great time. For those of you that may have noticed a reduction in the road and trail grooming, know that this is due to the ongoing endangered species candidacy period with regards to the Flat-tailed Horned Lizard. We are required to treat this little critter as endangered during the candidacy period and as such must restrict certain activities until such time a determination is made. Some of our long-standing special events were also impacted, having to move their events to areas outside Ocotillo Wells SVRA. We are looking forward to these events returning to Ocotillo Wells as soon as possible and we will be working with our stakeholders throughout the process. Enjoy another edition of this award-winning newsletter and we look forward to seeing you out at the park.

## Meet Larry...

Hi, my name is Larry Grosse, and I'm excited about joining the Housekeeping Staff as a Park Maintenance Assistant at Ocotillo Wells. I have worked many years in the insurance industry related to construction and home building operations. I was employed as a large claim Worker's Compensation claims examiner, became a Broker and Agent, and specialized in the California building industry for large contractors. Eventually, I opened my own insurance brokerage firm and operated it for 30 years. We specialized in the creation of insurance coverage programs for large construction developers and home builders to include Surety Bonding, Risk Management and Loss Control programs. About seven years ago, these operations slowed down so I went to work for Home Depot, managing their Building Material and Lumber Department and became a certified Garden Plant Expert. I also operated all heavy lifting equipment, gas and electric. Things I enjoy are horses, tennis, surfing, fly-fishing, and camping. I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.





# First Annual Critter Olympics

By Sharon Weil, State Park Interpreter I

In celebration of the Thanksgiving holiday, kids ages 5-12 participated in the Ocotillo Wells' First Annual Critter Olympics at the Soens Youth Track. The early morning rainy conditions did not discourage the competitive drive, as 55 young athletes participated in several animal challenges in hopes of winning the coveted Critter Olympic gold medal.

The program was created to introduce and explore the physical and behavioral adaptations of six amazing critters that live in our park. Olympians participated in six challenging events that tested their abilities to communicate like a coyote, strike like a sidewinder, do push-ups like an iguana, jump like a jackrabbit, just to name a few.

Following the competition, athletes and their families enjoyed a BBQ lunch and awards ceremony. Gold, silver and bronze medals were awarded in each age division and category. Parents and children alike commented with great enthusiasm that the day was not only a "really fun time" but was also a great way to learn more about the desert in which they recreate.



# Upcoming OW Interpretive Festivals

By Ocotillo Wells' Interpretive Staff

Mark your calendars! You don't want to miss the upcoming family-fun Ocotillo Wells' festivals! There will be exciting activities for all ages, so come on out and celebrate with us.

## Geology Daze, February 13-15

If it doesn't float, fly, or fall, it sits on rock. Beneath the shoes on our feet and the tires on our rides, rocks lie collecting the stories of time. Can we learn a thing or two from these rocks? Or are we just talking to a brick wall? Come out to Ocotillo Wells SVRA February 13<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> for our annual Geology Daze festival. Be prepared for a rocking' good time!



## Bug-A-Palooza, March 5

Experience the vast diversity of bugs and insects that call OW home at the annual Bug-A-Palooza on Saturday, March 5<sup>th</sup> at the Discovery Center. This festival focuses on the small but important animals that creep most people out. During the day, you will get a good look at some of the more well-known bugs, but at night, that's when Bug-A-Palooza really shines! Literally! Our 250-watt "Bug Magnet" light attracts thousands of buggy desert dwellers—flying, hopping, and careening onto our bug sheet. We will also take walking tours with UV black lights to the famous "Scorpion Hill" to reveal resident scorpions. Don't be scared, we hope to see you there!



## Hot Stars and Heavenly Bodies Astronomy Festival, March 12

Our Hot Stars and Heavenly Bodies Astronomy Festival is back for another stellar year at Ocotillo Wells SVRA! Join OW astronomers, enthusiasts, and scientists to discover our ever-changing universe on Saturday, March 12<sup>th</sup>. Enjoy solar viewing at the solar *Sky Trek* trailer, join the elite ranks of "Dark Sky" Junior Rangers, embrace your inner rocket scientist and build your very own rocket, and more! Experience the brilliant night skies first hand at Hot Stars Heavenly Bodies; we have something for everyone!

Photo by Steve Jurvetson, via Wikicommons





# First Day Ride

By Ocotillo Wells' Interpretive Staff

The First Day Ride festival was a huge hit at Ocotillo Wells SVRA! Over 300 visitors participated in this family-oriented New Year's Day festival, all of whom left with a full stomach and a smile on their face!

Visitors were encouraged to start the New Year off by taking an OHV ride with their family and friends to explore Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Once their First Day Ride was completed, participants were asked to join us at the Discovery Center for a variety of fun-filled family activities including

mapping their morning ride on a large park map. Collectively, over 2,500 miles were logged by OHV enthusiasts that day.

The festival had an OHV safety focus and included carnival-style safety games and activities. One of the highlights was the flash flood Jeep exhibit—where youngsters set up mini campsites and created OHV trails in the dirt, only to later inundate their model with water from a fake thunderstorm. This gave kids an opportunity to create their very own



mini flash flood and see first-hand the power water can have on their campsites and trails.

Another highlight was the debut of the new Tread Lightly! remote-controlled vehicle trail where kids, both young and old, tested their RC rock crawling skills as they maneuvered over five challenging obstacles. At each obstacle, participants were reminded of the importance of treading lightly and safely while recreating.



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# First Day Ride *continued...*

As a tribute to 2015 and the significance of Ocotillo Wells SVRA in our visitors' lives, participants also created their very own memory tiles. Using specialty markers and white tiles, visitors designed colorful artwork depicting their favorite recollections of the past year including OW destinations, the park's night sky, desert animals, their family campsite, as well as many others. These inspiring tiles will be



used in a future artwork exhibit at the park's Discovery Center.

Furthermore, a Rig-of-the-Year OHV show was part of the day's festival. Entrants showed off their pride and joy as visitors mingled around and voted for their favorite rig. The competition was tough, but a beautiful 4-Seat RZR took home the

Rig-of-the-Year trophy! During the festival, families were treated to an old-fashioned chilidog BBQ. It was a great opportunity for visitors to slow down and share quality time with friends and family. All-in-all, the New Year's Day festival was a GREAT way to kick-start 2016!





# Public Involvement in Ocotillo Wells SVRA's...

By Jim Cassidy and Tricia Dodds, Associate State Archaeologists

One of the core responsibilities of California State Parks is to protect the irreplaceable historic and prehistoric resources that exist on our park lands. The sites where historic and prehistoric events took place can only be understood today through the physical materials that still remain on the ground. Through the study of these precious materials, we are able to learn and share the stories of who we were and still are as people. Like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, as time passes, these remains gradually disappear through biodegradation, erosion, and other natural processes. However, among the most devastating impacts has been people's natural curiosity and tendency to want to collect interesting trinkets for their own personal collections. This has undoubtedly become one of our most serious challenges in our efforts to preserve our shared past.

In response to this widely recognized tendency that is rapidly destroying our shared cultural heritage, the Society for California Archaeology created the California Archaeological Site Stewardship Program (CASSP). This program provides a way for interested users of our Parks to become personally involved in helping to preserve and protect our disappearing cultural resources. This past December, 28 people from the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park and Ocotillo Wells State Vehicular Recreational Area (SVRA) participated in the two-day CASSP training to become volunteer site monitors. This comprehensive training was conducted by professional archaeologists and included information on how to recognize historic and prehistoric artifacts, defining site boundaries, site mapping, photo documentation, site condition assessment, and documentation of destructive events such as off-road activity. On the second day, site tours were conducted by experienced site monitors to apply the volunteer's newly acquired knowledge.



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## ...Cultural Site Stewardship Initiative

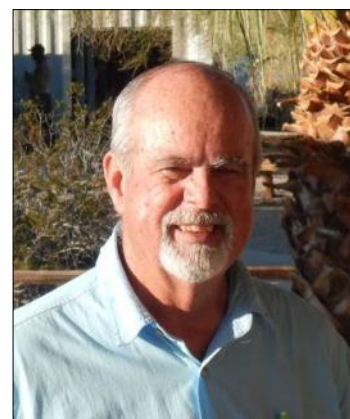
The Cultural Resource staff is excited to now have these newly-trained Site Stewards available to provide much needed assistance in monitoring our valuable sites and help protect them for future generations. These cultural resources guardians have agreed to voluntarily shoulder the responsibilities of visiting usually one or two sites on three or four occasions each year, filling out a site condition form and noting any changes that have occurred since the previous visit, conducting photographic documentation, and then filing this information with the CASSP Coordinator at the park. Site Stewards can request to monitor as many sites as desired anywhere in the state of California where there is a CASSP program. Since there are over 700 sites currently recorded in Ocotillo Wells with that number constantly increasing as new sites are discovered, Site Stewards certainly assist the Cultural Resource Department in keeping track of the conditions of sites.

Future CASSP training opportunities will be periodically scheduled for our two parks. If you think you would like to join this valuable cadre of Site Stewards, or just have questions, please contact the Ocotillo Wells SVRA Site Monitor Coordinator Associate State Archaeologist Jim Cassidy at [jim.cassidy@parks.ca.gov](mailto:jim.cassidy@parks.ca.gov). You can also visit the website at [www.cassp.org](http://www.cassp.org). Ocotillo Wells SVRA and Anza-Borrego Desert State Park are hoping to host another CASSP training during the 2017-2018 season.

**CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS  
PROTECTING THE PAST FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS!**

## Congratulations to Jim Cassidy

Jim was recently promoted to Associate State Archeologist (PI) at OW. He started his career working at Mesa Verde National Park, and then worked in private industry for many years. With Master Degrees in Public Administration and Cultural Anthropology, he returned to archaeological research and worked on studies on San Clemente Island and Santa Barbara, co-authoring a book. In 2004 he successfully completed his Doctorate in Anthropological Archaeology at UC Santa Barbara. Afterwards, he started working on various projects for the Navy and Marine Corps as a cultural resource program manager. Jim also has an avid professional interest in maritime prehistory. He is a valued member of our District Cultural Resources program.



# Wildlife Camera Program

By Sara Lockett, Environmental Scientist

Ocotillo Wells' Resources Department has been using wildlife cameras since 2007 to detect larger mammals that are present in and utilizing our park. The cameras are placed at various locations, such as water sources, throughout the year. Each camera is checked weekly by a field crew, who also review the pictures.

While these pictures are primarily used to inventory animals that appear in OW, the Interpretation Department also showcases some of the standout critters. Recently, a ring-tailed cat was pictured on the "Critter Cam" and a slideshow of it was shared on the Ocotillo Wells SVRA's Facebook feed. The last ringtail detected in the park was two years ago!



The trail cameras are a fun aspect of the Resources Department and everyone loves seeing what was pictured each week. Typically, the most common animals detected by the cameras include kit foxes, coyotes, ravens, and black-tailed



jackrabbits. However, there's always the chance of a surprise visitor. The recent ring-tailed cat is one such visitor, but in the past the cameras have detected badgers, prairie falcons, burrowing owls and bobcats!

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# Wildlife Camera Program *continued...*



## Meet Lloyd...

Lloyd Rose is excited about coming to work at Ocotillo Wells SVRA as a Park Maintenance Aide. Prior to OW, he worked for State Parks at Palomar Mountain in the Maintenance Department for three seasons as a Seasonal Maintenance Worker. This change in position will give him a chance to experience a very different type of State Park with very different topography. Lloyd's previous career was acting as a Risk Manager for various insurance brokers, and most recently, with Fifth Ave Insurance Services helping contractors with insurance problems and inspecting job sites. In his spare time he also acts as Vice President of the Electric Vehicle Association of San Diego, and over the years he has helped with many projects to convert gas vehicles to electric vehicles. He has also been involved in projects for solar energy storage.



## Meet Richard...

Hi my name is Richard A. Gutierrez. I was born and raised in the San Fernando Valley. I have over six years experience in landscaping and two years in maintenance. I moved out here to the desert with my family a year ago, and we currently live in Salton City. I have four boys ages 8, 6, 4, and my baby boy who just turned a year old. My wife Kimberly is now pregnant and due to give birth in less than a month. This time we are getting our girl, and we all are really excited!!! I can't wait to hold my baby girl in my arms. I now work as a Maintenance Aide for Housekeeping. I enjoy working here at Ocotillo Wells, and look forward to what lies ahead. The staff and crew members are all great, and I'm glad to be a part of the Ocotillo Wells experience.



## Do you know...

Why black-tailed jackrabbits, which are really hares, have such large ears?

Photo by Jim Harper - en-wikipedia



Answer: To better hear their enemies approaching, and to aid in cooling their bodies during the summer heat!



# Wildlife Tracking in Ocotillo Wells

By Beth Shugan, Senior Park Aide, Interpretation, and ABTT Mammal Tracker

Why would someone walk around the desert searching for wildlife tracks and sign (scat, digs, browse, dens, for example) on a regular basis? In 2009 the Resources Department at Ocotillo Wells was interested in which animals came to the natural dune-seep spring that was dug by large mammals in Barrel Springs. They contacted members of the San Diego Tracking Team and requested that a tracking transect be established to solve the mystery. The members of

the Anza-Borrego Tracking Team (ABTT), trained by senior trackers of the San Diego Tracking Team, added a second tracking transect near the junction of Tule and Eriogonum Washes in 2010.



Furrow kit fox track



Distinctive raccoon "fingers"

Tracking transects, which are one kilometer long and ten meters wide, are surveyed up to four times a year, preferably once each season. The objectives of surveying are to monitor wildlife populations, which may reflect the health of the ecosystem, and also to help the Resources

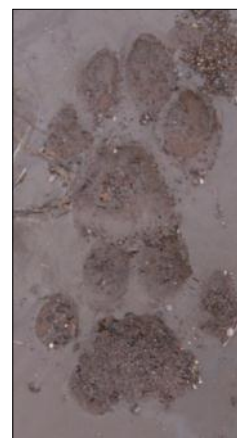
Department identify possible critical wildlife habitat areas and corridors. Tracking transects also confirm or add to the information captured by wildlife cameras that are placed at watering holes during the summer months.

Since the transects were established, the ABTT has confirmed the presence of pocket gophers in an area where they were previously unknown, recorded the trail of a raccoon passing through the desert (very rare!), and verified that desert cottontails do live in Barrel Springs—they were not juvenile jackrabbits! Mountain lion tracks passing through one transect confirmed a

reported sighting in an unusual habitat. In one transect the ABTT confirmed the tracks of a ringtail, which hadn't been seen for several years. Flash floods, severe drought and strong winds seasonally affect wildlife populations. Kangaroo rat tracks and burrows, frequently too plentiful to count, have been totally absent at times. Surveying each transect is a great adventure and learning experience.



Ringtail tracks



Bobcat tracks



Gray Fox



Coyote

All the collected data is sent to the San Diego Tracking Team and recorded in a data base for scientific research.

# New! Remote Control Tread Lightly! Trail

Ocotillo Wells SVRA is pleased to announce the opening of the first phase of its new Tread Lightly! RC Rock Crawler Trail located near the Discovery Center. In its current configuration, the trail provides RCers five challenging obstacles to maneuver while traveling along the trail. Obstacles are engineered to have alternative routes of travel—easier routes for first-timers and moderate to difficult routes for the higher-skilled operators.

But this is only the beginning! Over the course of the next year, we will be adding several new obstacles to tantalize your sense for

adventure. The next obstacle additions are planned for February and include a bridge,

a teeter-totter, and of course, more rocks to challenge your patience and route planning. Once the trail is completed next riding season, the RC trail will be nearly ¼ mile in length, and it will have something to offer all RC enthusiasts.

A big shout out goes to the Trails team for skillfully engineering the initial five obstacles of the project! They took what began as a large pile of rocks delivered by dump truck and converted it to a series of obstacles that are sure to become an exciting and challenging remote-controlled crawler trail for our OHV enthusiasts, young-and-old!

The trail is open to the public and we encourage you to bring your remote-controlled vehicle to test its rock crawling skills on this one-of-a-kind course. Let's see if you can maneuver over the obstacles without rolling! Be sure to watch our program schedule for days when our interpretive staff will be out on the trail leading RCers on an adventure. Thanks to the support of various OHV groups, we now have rock-crawling

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## New! Remote Control Trail *continued*

vehicles that you can use during these programs. But be careful, you may have so much fun that you end up purchasing your own!

Are you interested in being a part of this exciting project? Now is the time to join the fun! Currently, we are looking for interested people or groups to help build new obstacles, maintain the trail, and be trail guides. Imagine inspiring and coaching visitors as they move along the trail conquering the obstacles before them. If you are



First five obstacles on either side of the path

interested, please leave your name, phone number, email address and group name (if applicable) with one of the interpretive staff or at the Discovery Center. Together we can make the RC trail a great success!

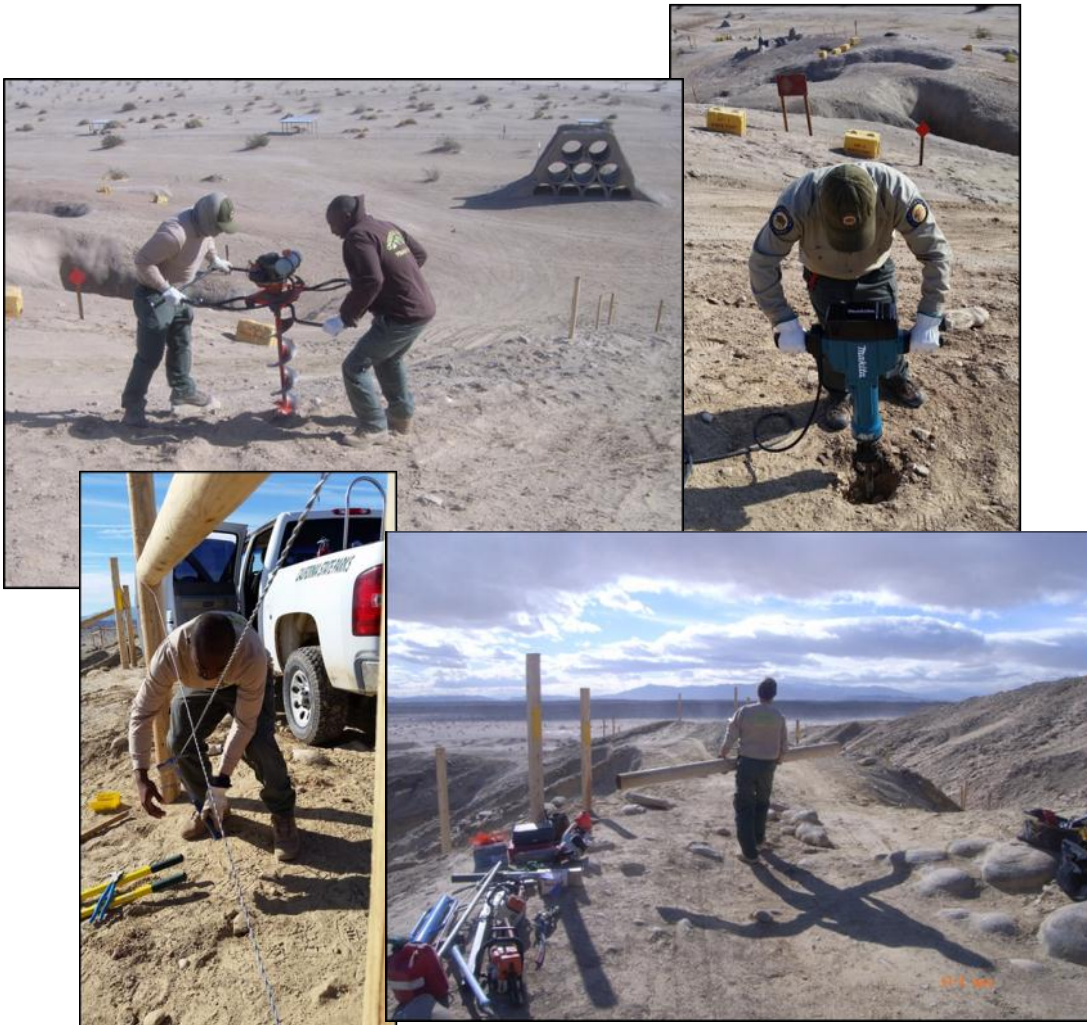
**See you on the trail!**

# Trails News

By Ryan Walasek, Park Maintenance Assistant

As the new year begins, so does work on a new obstacle at the 4x4 course, off Highway S-22. The obstacle is named Hydra, and will be a challenging multiple-choice hill climb. Trails' current construction effort is several fences in the area around the Hydra obstacle to direct traffic and protect the surface and vegetation. Then, working together with heavy equipment operators, rocks and concrete blocks will be set into the hill climbs so that each of the three 'heads' is a bit more difficult than the previous.

Here are a few of the steps for installing a fence. First, we determine where the log posts need to go, which is usually at a change in the line of elevation; corners get three posts for an H-brace for stability and strength. Holes are then drilled into the ground, or jackhammered, if the ground is really hard, and the posts are set in them. Then we build the braces, which includes tension wire from corner to corner to keep the brace from leaning or tilting when the fence is attached to it.



(Continued on next page...)



## Trails News *continued...*

Another main focus is repairing damaged fences, signs, and carsonites. (Carsonites are the white trail markers placed approximately every one-tenth of a mile along official trails.) Sign damage caused by wind, rain, or even vehicles, results in everything from bent signs to broken sign posts. Sometimes, during heavy flooding, signs will completely wash out and we'll find them afterwards as much as a mile downstream! Whatever the cause, Trails gets to repair them all.



Above, Pete and Victor attach signs to a post



Left, Pete checks for correct orientation of the sign

## Congratulations to Ryan Walasek

Join me in congratulating Ryan "Chuck" Walasek in his new promotion to Park Maintenance Assistant with the Trails Department here at Ocotillo Wells. This will be his sixth season working with Trails. Ryan's comprehensive knowledge and experience makes him a very important part of the team and also in the training of new members. Ryan grew up in the sticks of Borrego Springs, where he could go on a wilderness hike starting at his back door. After high school, he moved to the big city, where he worked in retail, a factory and then as an office worker. He realized none were the fit for him nor was city living, so he eventually migrated back to Borrego and joined the Trails Department at Ocotillo Wells SVRA. Congratulations and good luck Ryan!



# Heber Dunes Happenings

By Jaime Mendez, State Park Interpreter I

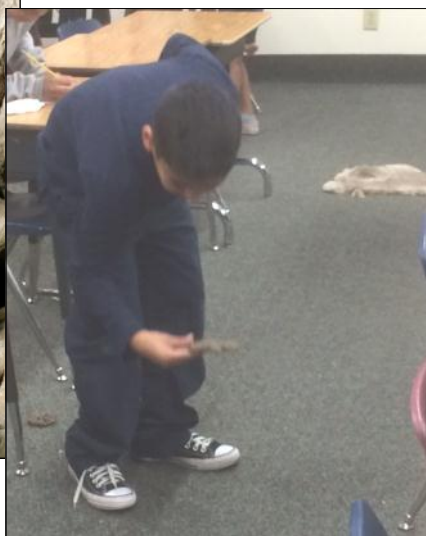
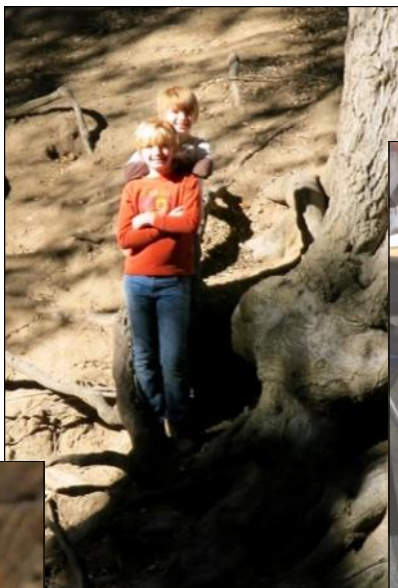
## Thanksgiving Fish Tales

Chomp Chomp Chomp

Gobble Gobble Gobble

Gulp Gulp Gulp

You're Gone!



Top left, De Anza Junior Rangers Thacker and Oliver, contributed this pine cone turkey to their family's Laguna Mountain Thanksgiving dinner.

Top right, Junior Ranger Michael has chosen a more traditional approach by tracking down his Thanksgiving dinner.

Where did that turkey go?  
Deep into the belly of a great big SHARK!

At least that was the ending Heber Dunes' Afterschool Junior Rangers agreed upon after exploring all things shark during Shark Week. The kids tested their shark species identification skills in a fast paced Shark Bingo contest. Predator/prey concepts were reinforced as participants played out their parts in Shark Sharades, and motor skills were put to use creating a working JAWS model to take home. Activities crawled out of Ancient Lake Cahuilla onto the shoreline as Junior Rangers honed their tracking skills in search of the illusive wild turkey. Imagine the trackers' surprise when they discovered that the turkey was really a turtle who had adapted and grown feathers! Take a look at the photo on the left to see what other unique turkey adaptations the Junior Rangers discovered over their Thanksgiving holiday.

(Continued on next page...)



# Heber Dunes Happenings *continued*

## Game On!

*“Come one, come all. You, sir, look like a winner. Identify the animal. Guess the car named after it, and win a prize! Why even a child can do it.”*

Surprisingly, of the 113 visitors to the Heber Dunes SVRA booth, the most successful contestants of the Animal/Car Match Challenge were youth. The 84 winners received the rare and coveted Heber Dunes sticker for their efforts. Flush with success, youthful winners also tried their luck at the Scat and Track Match table while their parents asked questions and picked up tips and information about the park and its ATV safety classes. All in all, it was a very busy day for Interpreter Jaime at the 3rd Annual Heber Car Show.



## Did you know...

Heber Dunes State Vehicular Recreation Area  
became a state park in 2007?

(Continued on next page...)

# Heber Dunes Happenings

## Santa's Workshop



*Top left, Heavy Equipment Operator elf Adam, on loan from OW, relocating Santa's Workshop at Heber Dunes. Job well done! Just in time for the holidays.*

*Bottom, Maintenance elves Cesar and Maribel hard at work digging post holes at Heber.*

December has arrived, and Santa's Workshop South, aka Heber Dunes SVRA, is going full bore. It has even had to borrow maintenance and heavy equipment operator elves from the North (Ocotillo Wells). Though the new Heber Ranger/Maintenance building is up and running, a lot of cleanup work, storage container realignment, and perimeter finishing work remains. Add in the inevitable repairs required for malfunctioning or nonfunctioning equipment discovered in the new structures, and it's easy to see why the maintenance elves are wearing holes in their elf safety shoes. With the end of December on the horizon, the hardworking Heber maintenance crew, led by Maintenance Worker I elf Martin, will be able to look back on 2015 with pride at the jobs well done !

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# Heber Dunes Happenings *continued...*

## The List



Heber's redesigned training and practice area being put to use by Jim Rue, ATV safety instructor.

*Dear Santa,*

*We know you usually don't get Christmas lists from grown ups and maybe never from a state park, but the gift we would like really isn't for us at all. It's for all the visitors that use our park.*

*Please be sure to leave the gift of a fun and safe ride in everyone's stocking this year. We would really appreciate it.*

*Thank you*

*The Staff at Heber Dunes SVRA*

# Visitor Services

By Brittany Veater, State Park Peace Officer

Every year, New Year's weekend brings a crowd of people to Ocotillo Wells. Unfortunately a side effect of most weekends is traffic collisions, which often result in medical aids. Here we have a multi-agency response to a rider down in the park. First to arrive on scene on this incident were the Desert Lifeguards, closely followed by a Ranger and Desert Lifeguard on patrol in our new Razor.



Cal Fire soon arrives, followed by Mercy Air. Each agency works together to give the patient the care they need so that they can return to Ocotillo Wells and continue riding.





# Sky Lanterns

By Adam Borello, Supervising State Park Peace Officer and Brittany Veater, State Park Peace Officer

Sky lanterns may be a fun night time activity while visiting Ocotillo Wells, but this activity is not only illegal, it is detrimental to the image of OHV recreationists.

Recently, Park Rangers have noticed a significant increase in the number of sky lanterns being sent upward by our area. This is due to an increase in their popularity, coupled with ease of purchasing and low cost. In fact, many of the local businesses are selling these items, likely exacerbating the issue.

While it is not only a citable misdemeanor to send burning material into the air (ref. CA Health and Safety code 13001), it is also a very high profile activity that is damaging to the image of our visitors, much in the same way as illegal fireworks.

As we all know, what goes up, must come down. These lanterns do not stay airborne forever; they eventually run out of fuel and fall from the sky. When they fall, there is absolutely no control over where they land. The worst case scenario is (while still burning) they may land on, and ignite, a structure such as a tent, trailer, or house.

In the desert, where the threat of a fire is low, there is a more important reason that we must not continue this activity. The truth is that most sky lanterns do not combust in the air and end up falling back to the ground, causing unsightly litter throughout the park and within our neighboring public and private lands. This sky lantern litter is frequently associated with OHV recreationists.

Ocotillo Wells Maintenance staff also noted a significant increase in the amount of sky lantern debris left behind following our recent holiday weekend, and as always, they worked tirelessly to clean up as much as they could find along our main roads and washes.

While park employees do their best to contend with this current issue, the long-term solution and control of this issue lies with the Ocotillo Wells SVRA visitors. We are optimistic that, by making informative enforcement contacts and through interpretive opportunities such as the Blowsand Reader, we are able to gain the compliance necessary in order to maintain the positive image of the typical Ocotillo Wells SVRA visitor—an image that is based on the philosophy of ‘Tread Lightly’ with an air (yes...pun intended) of curiosity and responsibility.



# Follow Ocotillo Wells SVRA on Facebook!



Find updates on changes in the park, historic and modern park photos, reminders about policies and regulations, and the schedule for our various interpretive programs. What a great forum for visitors to communicate and connect.

Check it out and “Like” us...because, after all, we like you.

[www.facebook.com/OcotilloWellsSVRA](http://www.facebook.com/OcotilloWellsSVRA)



## Upcoming Festivals

### Special Ocotillo Wells Weekends

Geology Daze! Geology Festival

February 13-15, 2016

Bug-a-Palooza Bug Festival

March 5, 2016

Hot Stars & Heavenly Bodies Astronomy Festival

March 12, 2016



### Ocotillo Wells District

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Borrego Springs, CA 92004

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[www.ohv.parks.ca.gov](http://www.ohv.parks.ca.gov)